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Nixon's Mysterious Pro

Disclosure Raises Many Questions

By Dick Barnes

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The White House statement disclosing sale of much of President Nixon's San Clemente property is raising almost as many questions as it answered.

So far the White House, has not come up with substantive new answers. Presidential spokesmen say generally they're standing on the three-page account released Friday.

The private property the President controls next to his Western White House in California has been a continuing subject of interest since he announced plans to acquire it in May 1969. The statement Friday disclosed that on Dec. 15, 1970, Nixon sold more than 20 acres of land within his walled compound to Robert Abplanalp, a wealthy New York industrialist who also owns a home within the Florida White House compound at Key Biscayne.

Keeps Mansion

Nixon retained 5.9 acres and the Spanish-style mansion overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

The statement said Abplanalp paid $1,249,000 for the land, which contains no buildings. It said he also loaned Nixon $625,000 to help the President buy the property in the first place. That amount is $205,000 more than the down payment Nixon had to put up for the $1.5 million purchase.

Some of the questions the statement didn't answer:

Why did the White House keep the deal a secret for nearly 2½ years?

From the outset the White House said Nixon intended to dispose of some of the property. At one time it was thought his presidential library might be erected there.

Periodic inquiries about the status of the property were usually answered with the statement that its disposition had not been decided upon or that it was held in trust by a Los Angeles trust company.

What does Abplanalp plan to do with the land?

His property is all within the wall erected by the government to give the Nixon family privacy. The government guards the entire compound. There is no evidence Abplanalp has made any separate use of his property.

[redacted]

A financial statement released at the same time he announced plans to buy at San Clemente showed Nixon had $571,000 in proceeds from a New York apartment sale and cash. The White House indicated he would make his down payment from this money.

But it turns out that he signed two mortgages totaling $1,080,000 and borrowed $625,000 from Abplanalp for a total of $1,705,000. The total cost of the property was $1.5 million and he put in improvements costing $123,514 for a total expenditure of $1,623,514.

Assuming he used the excess from his borrowings to help make subsequent mortgage payments of $116,000 before the 1970 sale, Nixon's total cash investment in the property was still only $34,514 at the time he sold to Abplanalp.

Has Nixon reduced the size of his mortgage since December, 1970, and if so has he needed new loans to make those payments?

The statement indicates he borrowed from Abplanalp to make $116,000 in mortgage payments due during 1970. After the sale the President still owed $340,000 of

perty Sale

an original $1 million mortgage, believed due in annual installments with final payment due by July 1974. The statement did not refer to any post-1970 payments.

What is the name of th investment company Abplanalp set to purchase and hold his segment of the property?

The statement did not say, and Abplanap, in a radio-telephone call placed to his home in the Bahamas Friday, refused to say.

The ultimate question is whether the deal really occurred, when and how the White House says it did.

The statement was clearly issued in response to a news story published two weeks ago by the Santa Ana Register alleging that Senate investigators believed the San Clemente property had been paid for with leftover 1968 campaign funds.

The White House earlier denied the story. No Senate investigating source could be located who would confirm the story.

Inquiry

After the story appeared the Associated Press inquired about the property to Richard O. Howlett, an officer of Title Insurance Trust Co., who is familiar with the property. The firm holds the property in trust and is listed as its owner in public records.

The White House said the sale to Abplanalp was accomplished by executing an assignment of interest in the trust and delivering it to Title Insurance and Trust.

Howlett said he was not permitted to disclose the name of the beneficiary of the trust.

But he said, a week before the White House statement, that the beneficiary was the same for all the land parcels in the compound.